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Perspectives of Literary Translators on the Suitability of Automated Translation Tools for Rendering Aesthetic Texts

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Abstract

This survey set out to investigate the opinions of 68 randomly selected (literary) translators about the suitability of automated translation tools for rendering aesthetic texts while maintaining the form of the original in the target language. The study was underpinned by Rogers's (2003) Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory, which explains how changes occur when new ideas are invented, depending on how such ideas are adopted or rejected. The research was designed and conducted in a mixed method, which involved both quantitative and qualitative collection and analyses. Convenience sampling was used to intentionally select random professional translators for the study. Participants' responses were coded and keyed using the Excel Spreadsheet, then exported into SPSS Version 25 for analyses. The findings revealed that, regarding the use of automated translation tools, almost all the participants, 98.5% (66), accepted that they use machine translation tools for rendering aesthetic texts. In addition, the results revealed that even though almost all the participants, 98.5% (66), confirmed that they use machine translation in rendering literary texts, most of them, 86.7% (49), said they used it often, and all of those who used it 100% (68) confirmed that the texts rendered using automated translation are acceptable. In all, just 40.8% of participants ended up having a general positive appraisal, while more of the participants, 46.3%, held a negative opinion, while 12.9% had no opinion at all. To conclude, although automated translation was used by almost all translators for rendering literary texts, a good number of professional translators are biased about it. This validated the hypothesis stated at the beginning of the research.

Keywords: Translation; Machine Translation Tools; Automated Translation; Literary Translators; Aesthetic Texts.

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Introduction

One of the key characteristics of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is the development of ICTs and ICT tools to respond to the need for efficient, fast, high quality and real-time information processing and dissemination. In fact, in this era marked by enhanced skills owing to artificial intelligence and robotics, translation is one of the fields which has evolved drastically, having progressed from the traditional pen-and-paper activity it used to be in the past, through to a machine-aided activity, to – almost – a completely automated practice. Indeed, the preference for automated translation has grown in geometric progression. For instance, at the European Commission, the use of SYSTRAN increased from 4000 to 140 000 pages between 1988 and 1994, while studies reveal that 2500 staff used automated translation at least 5 times every month, with 20% being from departments which provide translation services and 80% from other departments of the European Commission (Senez 1995). Indeed, considering the above, Rozmyslowicz (2023: 493) posits that human and machine translation are entangled in antagonistic relationship because nowadays, the machines seem to be doing the translation instead of the humans.

In Fact, scholars predict that a few decades to come, automated translation will take over translation practice, if professionals fail to find a balance between traditional translation practice and the new exigencies of translation technology (Schaler 2014:151 – 156). Some end users of translation claim that human translators will no longer be relevant to revise work produced by automated translation tools, while others now hire computer scientists, post-editors and language specialists to perform tasks that were performed by translators in the past. In fact, automated translation is now a key player of the commercial sector, with high quality output that is churned out at a profitable rate of 500 000 words per month (Schaler 2014:153). In tandem with these changing realities are equally changing expectations about the work of translators, whose job has been completely revolutionised by the ubiquity of automated translation tools (Lavault-Olleon 2011). With these fluctuations in the cost of translation and the shortening of deadlines, literary translators do not seemingly demonstrate the zeal to embrace the ongoing technological advancement, neither have they completely adopted the use of automated translation tools for rendering aesthetic texts, which creates room for speculation about this reticence on their part to embrace the ongoing innovations in the profession.

Curiously, in this era of the Third Industrial Revolution, when translation is carried out with automated tools, it is judged rather harshly by its end users, while human translators hold the biased opinion that the use of automated translation tools engenders translation that is below par with computer assisted human translation (Schaler 2016:151 – 156). The latter opines that translators see their work as creative products, so they have a justified sense of responsibility towards it and take pride in it. Hence, they believe that translation is demoted by automated translation, which, to them, is a "usurper" of the "purity" of the profession.

Based on the above background, this study sets out to investigate the perspectives of literary translators in Cameroon on the suitability of automated translation tools for rendering literary or aesthetic texts. This survey was conducted to gain more insights about the perception of automated translation by literary translators by posing a fundamental question, which goes thus: What is the opinion of literary translators about the suitability of automated translation tools for the rendering of aesthetic texts? To provide an answer to this question, it is, first, necessary to define the key concepts of this research, which are aesthetic/literary text, literary translation and automated translation.

1 Key Concepts

Three main concepts which this study centres, namely aesthetic text, literary translation and automated translation, are operationalised in the following paragraphs:

1.1 Aesthetic or Literary Text

An aesthetic text is one which invokes creative reading. This means readers must suspend individual attitudes and rethink positions because such texts leave gaps for them to fill. Gaps here refer to inherent ambiguities which cause readers to think of several possible ways of interpreting the text. In such texts, meaning and form are closely linked, so any attempt to separate them is bound to fail (Boase-Beier 2011:72).

A literary text is a text which has a poetic effect (Pilkington 2002: 21 cited by Boase-Beier 2011: 15). Poetic effect here refers to the cognitive effect of a text on its readers which arises during processing. It also includes searching for contexts in which the text can be understood, working out implicature or interpreting attitudes.

Based on the above characteristics of the aesthetic or literary text, scholars have argued that the translation of literature is not the same as literary translation. Hence, it is relevant to differentiate these two concepts here to avoid confusion. One could therefore say in general that the translation of literature consists in the translation of fictional works within the domains of poetry, prose, drama and all other works which fall within any of the afore-mentioned literary genres.

1.2 Literary Translation

Literary translation is translation which considers the literary nature of a source text to create a target text which does justice to its stylistic features such as iconicity and stylistic/rhetorical devices. Boase-Beier (2011: 46), Moreover, it is translation in which close attention is given not only to replicating the fictional world created by the source text author for the target audience, but also to ensuring the target text readers' engagement and duplicating the cognitive state embodied in the source text in the target text. Therefore, literary translation is both the translation of literary texts and the translation of texts in a literary manner. Here, texts are seen as fictional while greater attention is paid to style, such that literary translation is considered the transfer of style from one language or medium to another (Boase-Beier 2011). Style here is cognitive; it is not just a linguistic entity. Therefore, to translate style, attitude, state of mind, poetic effect and *implicature* must be translated.

In a nutshell, literary translation involves the use of creativity to transfer both the form and content of the source text into the target language for a new set of receptors. Admittedly, the aim of literary translation is to produce a text that is like the original. Hence, the translator must ensure that the new language text fulfils a similar function as the original text, it preserves the author's style, meaning, text type and form after it has been translated, and recreates the situational, formal and stylistic features of the original text. Literary translation is directly/indirectly or overtly/covertly underpinned by theory, which determines how the translation is carried out.

1.3 Automated Translation

Automated translation, otherwise referred to as machine translation, denotes the use of special computer software and applications to translate texts automatically (Baker and Saldanha 2009:162). In fact, machine translation is based on the automatic substitution of language data in the source language for data in another language, the target language. Senkal (2003:3) defines machine translation as an interdisciplinary activity which incorporates linguistics, computer science, artificial intelligence, translation theory, computational algorithms, data structures,

cognitive science and the study of human interactions. There is no clear difference between automated translation and machine translation, for both terms denote the same activity, which involves the use of specialist applications to render text. In this study as a matter of preference, the term automated translation is used.

Having defined the key concepts which this research deals with, the methodology is discussed below.

2 Methodology

The methodology encompasses the research design, the method of data collection and analysis, the sampling technique/ sample size, the theoretical framework, ethical considerations and the validity/reliability of the instruments of this research.

2.1 Research Design

This research is a survey, which uses questionnaires to elicit data from 68 conveniently selected professional translators who live and work in Cameroon.

2.2 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected were analysed using essentially the descriptive statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used are frequency count and percentages due to the nature of the data collected. No inferential statistical tools were used because the study was essentially descriptive. SPSS version 25 (Statistical Package for Social Science) was the software used to facilitate the analysis of the quantitative data. On the other hand, the qualitative data were analysed using the narrative technique whereby participants' responses were reported directly to support certain quantitative findings without the use of themes. Lastly, the findings were presented using frequency distribution tables, and on figures.

2.3 Sampling and Sample size

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method, is applied to select sixty-eight (68) subjects for the survey. The main criteria that all subjects have common are that they are trained professional translators who live in Cameroon and practice translation either as a freelance activity or as permanent employment. In fact, convenience sampling is used because it is a suitable technique through which the right subjects could be selected for the study, since it is difficult to find random professional translators who have experience working on literary texts.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This work is underpinned by Rogers's (2003) Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory. Diffusion is the process by which innovations spread, and changes occur among members of a social group or community, when new ideas/technologies are adopted. When a new idea is invented, it can either be diffused, adopted or rejected. Acceptance of a novelty leads to changes in the society and such changes are referred to as diffusion (Rogers 2003). Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory originated from communication, although it has been applied in research to explain phenomena in diverse fields, which include agriculture, public health, criminal justice, social work, marketing, etc.

Generally, DOI Theory explains how, over time, an idea or a product gains momentum and or spreads among a specific population or social system. As a result of this diffusion, more people, as part of that social system, gradually adopt the new idea, behaviour, or product, leading to its widespread popularity. It holds that consumers who adapt to change through the innovation-decision process go through five stages, namely, knowledge (being aware of the need for that innovation), persuasion, decision (deciding to adopt or reject the innovation), implementation (initially using the innovation to test it) and confirmation (continuing to use the innovation after it has been tested). After this, they tend to behave differently from the way they did previously and may purchase the new product or adopt the new idea, which is considered as novel or innovative. The result of this change is diffusion.

In fact, as the theory holds, not all members of a society adopt a new product simultaneously, for some people are more likely to adopt innovation faster than others. That is why it differentiates five adopter types, namely innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Research has proven that individuals in these different stages will embrace innovation at different rates. For instance, innovators possess different attributes that distinguish them from laggards, who are reticent to adopt innovation or who adopt it later.

Indeed, most new ideas studied nowadays, including automated translation, are technological innovations. According to the DOI Theory, although technological innovation creates uncertainty in potential adopters, especially about its expected consequences, it also represents an opportunity for reduced uncertainty (Rogers 2003:13). As a technological advancement in translation practice, automated translation tools were deliberately designed by computational linguists, as a contribution that will mitigate uncertainty in the cause-effect relationship that comes into play when translators apply these tools to achieve their desired outcome during translation (Rogers 2003).

The DOI Theory is applied to this research, firstly, to foster an understanding of some translators' attitudes towards the dissemination of translation technology, given that they are primary users of automated translation tools. Secondly, this theory is also applied to illustrate and explain translators' preference for, and perspectives about automated translation for rendering aesthetic texts and their reasons for adopting/not adopting its tools for these types of texts.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

To guard against ethical issues in relation to this study, respondents were informed that the research was for purely academic purposes. Moreover, in the introduction of the questionnaire, the purpose of the data collection was, clearly, spelled out, while respondents were informed that their identity and anonymity will be preserved. Also, respondents were informed that their participation in this was entirely voluntary, hence, they could refrain from answering any or all the questions if they felt uncomfortable. In addition, they were informed that by agreeing to fill and return the questionnaire, they were giving their consent for their answers to be analysed and used in this survey. Above all, they were reassured that all responses will be anonymised, and there was no way to trace their answers back to them. Lastly, they were told that they will not be receiving any remuneration in return for their time by agreeing to participate in this study. The researcher's email address was also included in the questionnaire to address any concerns or questions about respondents' rights as participants in this study.

2.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The validity of instruments was ensured using close-ended questionnaires for data collection. These precise tools measure and elicit accurate responses and leave little room for respondents to digress from the required responses. Hence, both the data and instruments are reliable, given that they are consistent, as demonstrated by Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis, demonstrated on the table below:

Table 1: *Reliability Statistics*

Variables	**Cronbach Alpha Coefficients**	**Variance**	**No of items**
Use of machine translation / translation memory	0.843	0.012	4
Perception of machine translation with reference to time spent and output quality	0.807	0.005	3
Impact of machine translation on translation activities	0.825	0.002	4
Impact of machine translation on translators	0.874	0.041	5
Overall reliability analysis value	**0.837**	**0.015**	**16**

The internal consistency of the participants is satisfactory for all the sub-variables with the coefficient values ranging from 0.807 to 0.874. The overall coefficient value is 0.837, higher than the recommended threshold of 0.7. The very low variance implies that the participants do not vary greatly in the opinion. Based on this, it was concluded that the participants were consistent in their responses, thus ensuring validity and reliability of the findings of this study.

By applying the above methodology, the findings of the study are, thus, presented in the following paragraphs.

3 Data Analyses and Presentation of Findings

The findings of this research are presented on tables and pie charts, and then they are discussed and explained, hence a triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative methods of analyses. Data of this study were culled from the opinions of 68 professional translators, whose demographic information is presented below:

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic		**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender	Female	35	51.5
	Male	33	48.5
Age range	21-25	5	7.6
	26-30	28	42.4
	31-35	19	28.8
	36-40	8	12.1
	More than 40	6	9.1
Educational level	Bachelor's	8	11.8
	Master's	59	86.8
	PhD	1	1.5

Number of years they've each worked as professional translators	1-5 years	45	66.2
	6-10 years	15	22.1
	11-15 years	3	4.4
	16-20 years	2	2.9
	More than 20 years	3	4.4
Work position	Freelance only	25	37.3
	In-house and freelance	15	22.4
	In-house, freelance, and remote translators	9	13.4
	Freelance and remote translators	6	9.0
	Semi-independent translators	5	7.5
	Remote translator	1	1.5
	Freelance and remote translator	1	1.5
Language combination	English A-French B	34	50.0
	French A-English B	16	23.5
	French A-English B-Spanish C	13	19.5
	French A-English B-German C	5	7.4

Among the 68 professional translators sampled (participants), 51.5% (35) were females and 48.5% (33) were males. With respect to age, 42.4% (28) were within the age range of 26-30 years, 28.8% (19) were within 31-35 years, 12.1% (8) were within 36-40 years, 9.1% (6) were more than 40 years old, and 7.6% (5) were between 21-25 years old.

Concerning their respective educational levels the majority 86.8% (59) were holders of master's degrees, while 11.8% (8) were holders of bachelor's degrees and 1.5% (1) was a holder of a doctorate degree.

With respect to the number of years spent in the translation profession, the majority, 66.2% (45), had been in the profession for 1-5 years, followed by 22.1% (15) who had practiced translation for 6-10 years, then another group 4.4% (3) had practiced for 11-15 years, while another 4.4% (3) had done it for more than 20 years and the least number 2.9% (2) had practiced it for 16-20 years.

Regarding employment status, 37.3% (25) were freelance translators, 22.4% (15) worked in-house and freelance, 13.4% (9) were freelance and remote translators, 7.5% (5) were semi-independent translators, and 1.5% (1) was a remote translator. Technically, almost all the respondents were freelance translators.

Lastly, apropos of language combination, half 50.0% (34) were English A-French B, 23.5% (16) were French A-English B, 19.5% (13) were French A-English B-Spanish C, and 7.4% (5) were French A-English B-German C.

Table 3: Type of Text Translated and Estimation of Daily Output of Respondents

Questions		Frequency	Percentage
Type of texts translated	Literary texts	31	45.6
	Legal texts	10	14.7
	Technical texts	7	10.3
	Websites	1	1.5
	User manual	2	2.9

	Others	17	25.0
Estimation of average daily output of translated texts without any translation aids.	Less than 2000 words per day	39	58.2
	Above 2000 to 3000 words per day	24	35.8
	Above 3000 to 5000 words per day	3	4.5
	More than 5000 words per day	1	1.5

Based on types of texts translated, 14.7% (10) usually translate legal texts, 10.3% (7) usually translate technical texts, 2.9% (2) usually translate user manuals, 45.6% (31) usually translate literary texts and 25% (17) usually translate other types of texts not mentioned, and 1.5% (1) translate websites. It can be noted that the greater number of the participants usually translates literary texts. Based on the average daily output of participants without any translation aid, 58.2% (39) translate less than 2000 words per day, 35.8% (24) translate above 2000 to 3000 words per day, 4.5% (3) translate above 3000 to 5000 words per day and 1.5% (1) translates more than 5100 words per day.

Table 4: Use of Automated Translation Tools for Rendering Aesthetic Texts

Questions	Response options	Frequency	Percentage
Use of automated translation tools or a translation memory	Yes	66	98.5
	No	1	1.5
Use of Google translate	Yes	65	97.0
	No	2	3.0
Frequency of usage of automated translation for translating literary texts	Very often	10	14.7
	Often	20	29.4
	Quite often	29	42.6
	Rarely	8	11.8
	Never	1	1.5
Have received formal training on automated translation	Yes	24	35.8
	No	43	64.2

Regarding the use of automated translation tools on aesthetic texts, almost all the participants, 98.5% (66), accepted that they use machine translation. More so, majority, 97.0% (65), of participants also affirmed that they use Google translate while 3.0% (2) said they do not. In answer to the question about the purpose for using Google translate, 51.5% (34) used it to make drafts of the texts they were about to translate, 18.2% (12) used it to get the gist of any type of texts, 13.6% (9) used it to translate technical documents, 4.5% (3) used it to see what a text is like, 1.5% (1) used it to translate pages they come across while browsing on the internet, and 10.6% (7) used it for other purposes. However, the participants who agreed that they use Google translate indicated that the translations are not as good, free-flowing, and semantically meaningful as human translations rendered using computer-assisted translation tools.

Furthermore, based on the frequency of usage of automated translation tools, 14.7% (10) used it very often, 29.4% (20) often, 42.6% (29) quite often, and 11.8% (8) rarely. Lastly, although

almost all the participants confirmed that they use automated translation, only 35.8% (24) of them had received formal training on the use of automated translation tools, while many, 64.2% (43), were not formally trained.

One respondent held the general view that "*… I think automated translation is good and quite helpful. Though it may not produce very bright output in a specific language pair, all the same, I think it is successful because it offers a general idea about the text. I understand this especially when I use Deepl or Google Translate in my literary translation tasks. Of course, I do not come across "a very professional" translation, yet it gives a gist of the content of the text…*"

Table 5: Perception about Automated Translation with Reference to Time Spent and Quality of Output

Questions	Response options	Frequency	Percentage
When translating aesthetic texts, translators spend more time on documentation than on automated translation	Strongly Agree	12	17.6
	Agree	28	41.2
	Disagree	5	7.4
	Strongly Disagree	3	4.4
	Neutral	20	29.4
When translators translate texts with automated translation, the result is more readable (of higher language quality) than when it is done by the human translator	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	6	8.8
	Disagree	31	45.6
	Strongly Disagree	11	16.2
	Neutral	20	29.4
How easily could you understand automated translation output?	Understandable	33	49.3
	Quite understandable	21	31.3
	Slightly understandable	13	19.4
	Not understandable	0	0.0

Based on participants' opinions regarding time spent by human translators on documentation as compared to that spent on automated translation, cumulatively, 58.8% (40) of participants agree that they spend more time on documentation than on machine translation while translating literary text while 11.8% (8) claim that they do not and 29.4% (20) are neutral.

Furthermore, looking at the readability of texts translated via automated translation, only 8.8% (6) of respondents agree that the language quality is high while many 61.8% (42) hold the opposite view, and 29.4% (20) are neutral.

More so, based on the degree of understanding of automated translation outputs, 49.3% (33) of participants said it is easily understandable, 31.3% (21) said it is quite understandable while 19.4% (13) said it is slightly understandable, and none of them said it is not understandable at all. By this, it implies that although machine translation output is not of higher linguistic quality as indicated by most respondents, it is still easily understood to some extent. This implies that automated translation output is not totally bad.

Table 6: Description of Translation Procedures when Using Automated Translation and Preference between Automated Translation and Human Translation

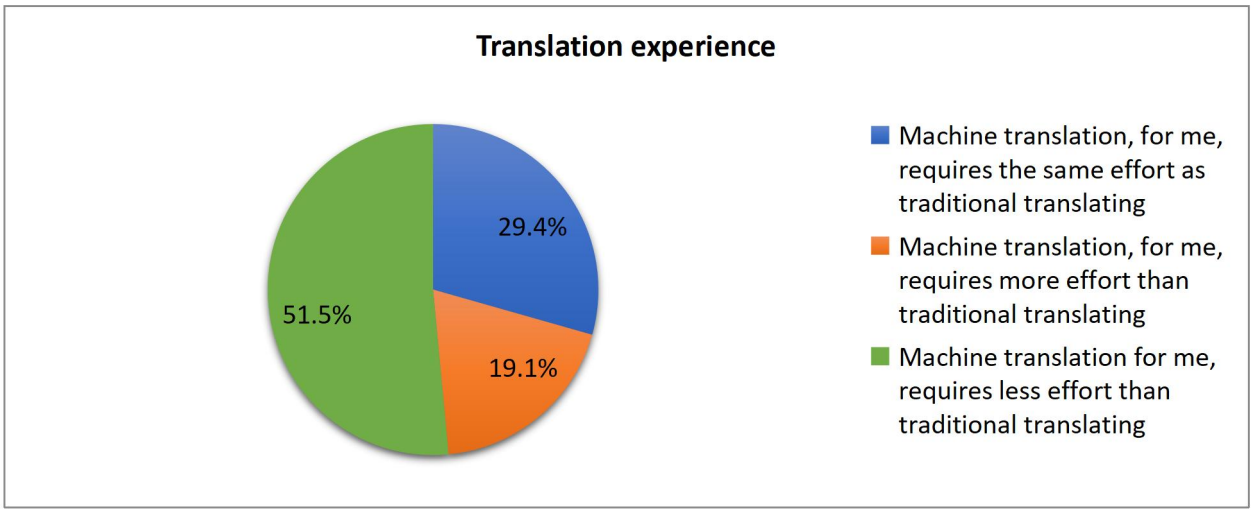
Questions	Response options	Frequency	Percentage
As you translate, do you go back and forth, and revise your sentences before going to the next sentence?	Frequently	20	29.4
	Always	34	50.0
	Sometimes	9	13.2
	Rarely	3	4.4
	Never	2	2.9
Immediately after you finish translating the whole text using automated translation, do you go back to all sentences and review them one by one?	Frequently	14	20.6
	Always	47	69.1
	Sometimes	3	4.4
	Rarely	2	2.9
	Never	2	2.9
Based on your translation experience, do you prefer machine translation more than computer-assisted translation?	Frequently	13	19.4
	Always	3	4.5
	Sometimes	37	55.2
	Rarely	7	10.4
	Never	7	10.4

Based on participants' narration of translation procedure when using automated translation tools, half of them, 50.0% (34), always go back and forth to revise translated sentences before moving to the next sentence while 29.4% (20) do this frequently, 13.2% (9) sometimes, 4.4% (3) rarely and 2.9% (2) never. Cumulatively, most participants, 79.4% (54), often go back and forth to revise translated sentences before moving to the next sentence.

Furthermore, about revising the entire text after completion with the aid of automated translation tools, 69.1% (47) of participants said they always go back to revise all sentences and review one by one, while 20.6% (14) do this frequently, few 4.4% (3) do this sometimes, and 2.9% (2) do this rarely and never. Cumulatively, upon completion of literary translation tasks using automated translation tools most participants 89.7% (61) often go back to revise all sentences and review them one by one. They do this during post-editing or revision.

Lastly, based on participants' preference of automated translation vis-à-vis computer assisted human translation, 55.2% (37) of them sometimes prefer automated translation, 19.4% (13) frequently prefer it, 4.5% (3) always prefer it, 10.4% (7) rarely prefer it and another 10.4% (7) never prioritise it. Cumulatively, 79.1% (53) of participants prefer automated translation more than computer assisted human translation. However, a translator warned that: "… *It is not possible to trust automated translation output. When I am translating a literary text, I try to stick to the source text as much as possible. Therefore, automated translation output does not negatively affect my work. It is instead useful for me. All the same, it is crucial to verify, post-edit and revise the output*…."

Figure 1: Participants' Best Experience of Translation with or without Automated Translation



The chart above describes the translation experience of participants, with or without automated translation experience. As indicated, 29.4% (20) claim that to them, automated translation requires the same effort as computer-assisted human translation, while 19.1% (13) hold that automated translation requires more effort than machine assisted human translation, and 51.5% (35) state that automated translation, to them, requires less effort than machine assisted human translation. Most participants, including "old school" professionals, affirmed that automated translation requires less effort than computer assisted human translation. All the same, it depends on the text, subject and terminology.

3.1 The Impact of Machine Translation on Translation Activities

Table 7: Participants' Opinion on the Impact of Automated Translation on Translation Activities

Questions	Totally Agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally Disagree	Don't know
Translation is more acceptable to the client	1 (1.5%)	16 (23.5%)	31 (45.6%)	8 (11.8%)	12 (17.6%)
Translation is less acceptable to end users	6 (8.8%)	19 (27.9%)	21 (30.9%)	7 (10.4%)	15 (22.1%)
Better terminological and phraseological congruence in the translated text	3 (4.4%)	22 (32.4%)	28 (41.2%)	5 (7.4%)	10 (14.7%)
Translated text reflects knowledge of the field of specialisation	3 (4.4%)	30 (44.1%)	17 (25.0%)	4 (5.9%)	14 (20.6%)

With reference to the impact of automated translation on the translation of aesthetic texts, cumulatively, 25.0% (17) of participants agreed that automated translation is more acceptable to clients while 57.4% (39) held that it is not, and 17.6% (12) are uncertain. More so, 36.8% (25) of participants agreed that automated translation is less acceptable to end users, while 41.3% (28) denied this claim and 22.1% (15) do not hold any opinion about this. Furthermore, 36.8% (25) of participants agreed that texts produced with automated translation tools have better terminological and phraseological congruence, while 48.6% (33) denied that it is not the case and 14.7% (10) did not have any opinion on this fact. Lastly, 48.6% (33) of participants agreed that automated translation indicates knowledge in the field of specialisation while 30.9% (21) denied, and 20.6% (14) do not know. For example, a translator said "… *When you translate a*

literary text using automated translation, there is a greater probability that the translated text reflects the specific knowledge of the source text. This is because automated translation tools are more efficient in producing specialised or technical texts…."

3.2The Impact of Automated Translation on Translators' Skills

Table 8: Participants Opinion on the Impact of Automated Translation on Translators

Items	Totally Agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally Disagree	Don't know
Translator's expertise not recognised by the client and users	6 (8.8%)	13 (19.1%)	26 (38.2%)	12 (17.6%)	11 (16.2%)
Digital dependency of the translator	8 (11.8%)	36 (52.9%)	13 (19.1%)	4 (5.9%)	7 (10.3%)
Loss of prestige	3 (4.4%)	12 (17.6%)	25 (36.8%)	10 (14.7%)	18 (26.5%)
Unfair competition	7 (10.3%)	13 (19.1%)	24 (35.3%)	8 (11.8%)	16 (23.5%)
Translator's competence upgraded	3 (4.4%)	17 (25.0%)	18 (26.5%)	8 (11.8%)	22 (32.4%)

Regarding the impact of automated translation on translators' skills, cumulatively, 27.9% (19) of participants agreed that translator's expertise is not recognised by the client and users while 55.8% (38) of participants disagreed and 16.2% (11) were uncertain. Thus, more participants opined that irrespective of the use of automated translation, translators' expertise is still recognised by clients and users. In line with this, a respondent said: "… *No matter what happens in translating with machines, the translator is still indispensable.*"

With reference to digital dependency of translators, cumulatively, 64.7% (44) of participants agreed that translators depend on digital technology, while 25.0% (17) disagreed and 10.3% (7) were uncertain. Thus, it could be noted that more respondents believed that translators depend too much on digital tools. For instance, one translator said: "… *Automated translation is not a bad practice. Unfortunately, translators, especially upcoming ones, exhibit a lot of digital dependency on automated translation in this era. They are not developing their cognitive abilities properly, the way true translators are supposed to do. They have become so dependent on these tools that it seems they cannot translate without them. Indeed, their career seems to depend on them. They are trading their source of livelihood in the long run due to digital dependence….*"

Furthermore, about loss of prestige of the profession, 23.0% (15) of participants agreed that automated translation has resulted to loss of prestige of the translator's job while 51.5% (35) of participants disagreed about this and 26.5% (18) were uncertain. Thus, it could be said that more participants denied that machine translation had resulted to a loss of prestige of the profession. In other words, the status of translation remains unaffected. To support this assertion, a translator said: "…*With the advent of automated translation technology, the translator does not feel that his/her value has decreased. The prestige of the job of translators is still intact, because translators perform multiple tasks, and their work is multi-faceted….*" However, some translators maintain their stance that translators have lost their prestige and glory. To support this statement, another translator said: "… *The translator feels frustrated because due to the existence of automated translation tools, many bilinguals think that they can translate without undergoing professional translation training. Unfortunately, the ubiquity of automated translation tools gives the impression that just because an individual masters two languages, and possesses the technology of*

automated translation and tools, s/he can usurp the work of professionals. This represents a serious threat to the professionalism aspect of the career, while the prestige and monopoly that professional translators used to enjoy in their careers is now jeopardised…."

Moreover, with reference to unfair competition, 29.4% (20) of participants agreed that automated translation engenders unfair competition while a majority, 47.1% (32), of respondents disagreed and 23.5% (16) were uncertain.

Last, concerning the upgrade of the status of translators, 29.4% (20) of participants agreed that machine translation has upgraded their status while 38.3% (26) disagreed and 32.4% (22) were uncertain. For instance, a translator said: "*… I disagree with the claim that automated translation has upgraded our status as translators. We are still the same old masters of the game….*" Another translator narrated that: "*…. Automated translation is not a threat to us translators as others perceive it to be. The advent of automated translation has brought a turnaround in our career. At first, translators had to only translate from the source language to the target language. That was the initial role of translators, which made them not to be versatile. Nowadays, the translator is no longer bound to do that sole task. S/he now has other avenues to explore. This technology has upgraded our status ….*"

4. Results and Discussion

Generally, the findings hold that although almost all the participants, 98.5% (66), affirm that they use machine translation for aesthetic texts. Most of them, 86.7% (49), commonly used it, and all of those who used, 100% (66), accepted that the translated texts are readable. Surprisingly, just 40.8% of participants ended up having a general positive appraisal of the use of automated translation for aesthetic texts, while more participants (46.3%) hold a negative opinion of it and 12.9% were neutral. With this great inconsistency, it was concluded that although automated translation tools are used by almost all translators, a good number of them hold a biased opinion about it in their rating.

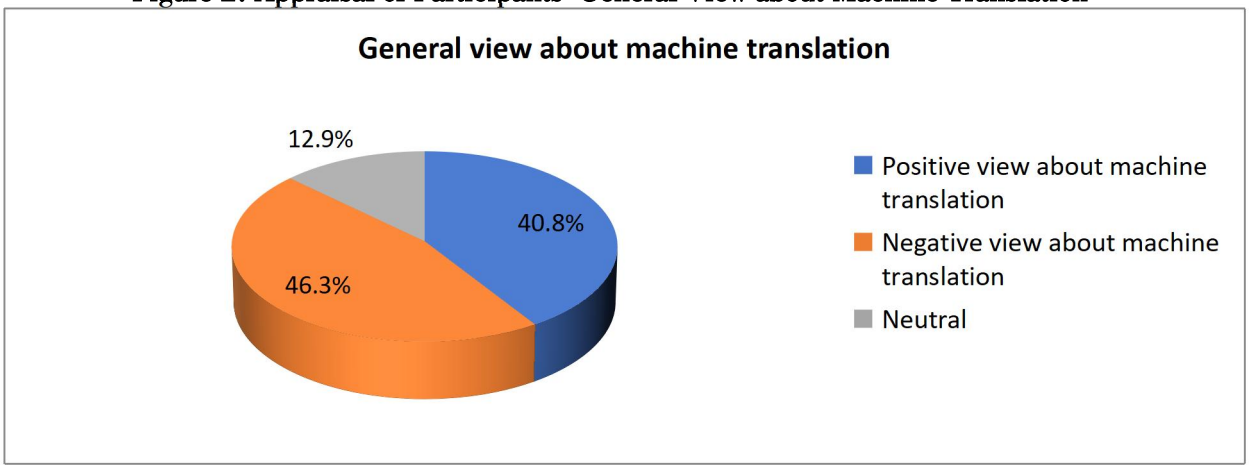
These results indicate that professional translators in Cameroon tend to have a negative attitude towards the use of automated translation tools for rendering aesthetic texts because they apart from being anxious about the unknown, they are also afraid that new technologies will cause them to become obsolete and thus lose their livelihood. As a defence mechanism, they reject automation to maintain control over the activity.

From these results, it is evident, in keeping with the DOI theory, that among the translators interviewed, almost all participants 66 (98.5%) are innovators, early adopters, or early majority, while only 2 (1.5%) are late majority and laggards. Furthermore, these findings reveal that most subjects have gone through first four stages the innovation-decision process (knowledge, persuasion, decision and implementation) while a lesser number is yet to go through the last stage, which is confirmation.

5. Verification of Hypothesis

It was hypothesised at the beginning of this study that literary translators hold a biased opinion about machine translation. The above hypothesis is supported by evidence from the research, for the trends consistently align with the assumptions made at the onset of the study. The findings support the assertion that more translators (46.3%) hold negative views about automated translation, while a smaller number (40.8%) have a positive opinion about the mode of translation.

Figure 2: Appraisal of Participants' General View about Machine Translation



6. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the study results in two key recommendations to literary translators in Cameroon, which are as follows:

Firstly, there is need to give support and training to literary translators in Cameroon so that they will be encouraged to have positive mindsets about new automated translation technologies. With this change of attitudes, they will begin to understand that these ongoing technological advancements in the field of translation have the potential to make their work easier and faster, while making them more efficient professionals as well.

Secondly, the Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters in Cameroon (APTIC) is encouraged to champion expert-led professional development programmes for literary translators that will support these translators to develop competencies in the use of automated translation tools, encourage onboarding and motivate user adoption. In fact, such a move would rather enhance translators' knowledge about the capacity of automated translation tools to rather complement their activities, instead of taking away their livelihoods. Hence, it is recommended that translator trainers should incorporate translation technology at all levels of translation studies courses, establish translation technology centres, and provide better financial and political support for joint industrial and academic research projects at all levels.

7. Conclusion

With this relatively noticeable degree of inconsistency, it can be concluded that although automated translation was used by almost all translators for rendering literary texts, a good number of professional translators hold biased opinions about it in their rating, which validated the hypothesis stated at the beginning of the research. From the above analysis, it can be presumed that literary translators are not likely to lose their autonomy and expertise due to "overdependence" on automated translation. In fact, in line with this view Gil and Pym (2006:9) caution that while automated translation is relevant because it enables translators to meet industry deadlines, the use of automated translation tools to produce aesthetic texts may lead to translation with no cohesive style, made up of sentences put together which can read like "sentence salad" which is contextually inconsistent with originals. In other words, professional

translators should not depend entirely on automation without using their cognitive abilities to perform literary translation tasks because of the volume of work they are expected to produce within shorter deadlines and under enormous pressure. In line with Schaler's (2016: 151 – 156) recommendation, translators need a change in their professional mind-set if they want to stay relevant in the "interesting and lucrative" areas of the translation activity. To conclude, as Tieber & Baumgarten (2024: 379 – 390) posit, machines do not have the ability to be mean: it is technology that is not transparent, is subject to power play and prone to capitalist competition.

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